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S. 2491

To authorize the President to award a gold medal on behalf of Congress to the Choctaw and Comanche code talkers in recognition of the contributions provided by those individuals to the United States.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MAY 9, 2002

Mr. INHOFE introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs

A BILL

To authorize the President to award a gold medal on behalf of Congress to the Choctaw and Comanche code talkers in recognition of the contributions provided by those individuals to the United States.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Honoring the Choctaw
5 and Comanche Code Talkers Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds that—

1 (1) on April 6, 1917, the United States, after
2 extraordinary provocations, declared war on Ger-
3 many and began what is known as the First World
4 War;

5 (2) at that time, Indian people in the United
6 States, including members of the Choctaw Nation,
7 were not accorded citizenship;

8 (3) without regard to this lack of citizenship,
9 many members of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma
10 and other Indian tribes and Nations enlisted in the
11 armed forces to fight on behalf of the United States;

12 (4) members of the Choctaw Nation enlisted in
13 the force known as the American Expeditionary
14 Force, which began hostile actions in France in the
15 fall of 1917;

16 (5) members of the Choctaw Nation were incor-
17 porated in a company of Indian enlistees serving in
18 the 142nd Infantry Company of the 36th Division;

19 (6) because of the proximity and static nature
20 of the battle lines in World War I, a method of com-
21 munication that could be used without the knowl-
22 edge of the enemy was necessary;

23 (7) a commander of the United States realized
24 that he had under his command a number of sol-
25 diers who spoke a Native language;

1 (8) while the use of Native languages was dis-
2 couraged by the military of the United States, the
3 commander sought out and recruited 18 Choctaw
4 Indians to assist in the transmission of field tele-
5 phone communications during an upcoming cam-
6 paign;

7 (9) because the language used by the Choctaw
8 soldiers in the transmission of information was not
9 based on a European language or mathematical pro-
10 gression, the Germans were unable to understand
11 any of the transmissions;

12 (10) the Choctaw soldiers were placed in dif-
13 ferent command positions, to achieve the widest pos-
14 sible area for communications;

15 (11) the use of the Choctaw code talkers was
16 particularly important in the movement of military
17 personnel of the United States in October 1918 (in-
18 cluding securing forward and exposed positions),
19 in—

20 (A) the protection of supplies during action
21 (including protecting gun emplacements from
22 enemy shelling); and

23 (B) in the preparation for the assault on
24 German positions in the final stages of combat
25 operations in the fall of 1918;

1 (12) in the opinion of the officers involved, the
2 use of the Choctaw Indians to transmit information
3 in their Native language saved men and munitions,
4 and was highly successful;

5 (13) based on that successful experience, Choctaw
6 Indians were withdrawn from front line units to
7 be trained in the transmission of codes so as to be
8 more widely used when World War I ended;

9 (14) the Germans never succeeded in breaking
10 the Choctaw code;

11 (15) use of the Choctaw code talkers was the
12 first instance in modern warfare in which the transmission
13 of messages in a Native American language
14 was used for the purpose of confusing the enemy;

15 (16) on December 7, 1941, the Japanese Empire
16 attacked Pearl Harbor, prompting Congress to
17 declare war on the Japanese the following day;

18 (17) the military code had been developed by
19 the United States for transmitting messages, but
20 that code had been deciphered by the Japanese;

21 (18) a search by intelligence officials of the
22 United States was carried out to develop new means
23 to counter the enemy;

24 (19) as occurred during World War I, the Federal
25 Government called on an Indian tribe, in this

1 instance, the Comanche Nation, to support the mili-
2 tary effort;

3 (20) the United States Army sent 14
4 Comanche Indians overseas to serve as members of
5 the 4th Signal Company of the 4th Infantry Divi-
6 sion;

7 (21) the Comanche code talkers passed mes-
8 sages over telephones and radios in their native
9 tongue so as to prevent the enemy from intercepting
10 and deciphering the messages;

11 (22) because no written Comanche language ex-
12 isted, and because there were no Comanche words
13 for many military terms, a military code had to be
14 devised and written;

15 (23) by using the Comanche language, Coman-
16 che code talkers were able to—

17 (A) provide secure communications;

18 (B) protect tactical movements; and

19 (C) ensure that troops would not be in
20 danger from an enemy eavesdropping on signal
21 transmissions;

22 (24) several of the 14 Comanche code talkers
23 coded messages sent from the battlefields in Europe
24 back to division headquarters, where the remainder

1 of the Comanche code talkers decoded the mes-
2 sages;

3 (25) the work of the Comanche code talkers
4 thwarted enemy efforts to steal communications of
5 the United States;

6 (26) the efforts of the Comanche code talkers
7 were especially important during and after the Allied
8 landings at Normandy in June 1944;

9 (27) the Comanche code talkers contributed
10 greatly to the Allied war effort in Europe and were
11 instrumental in winning the war in Europe;

12 (28) the efforts of the Comanche code talkers
13 saved countless lives;

14 (29) only 1 of the Comanche code talkers re-
15 mains alive as of the date of enactment of this Act;
16 and

17 (30) the actions of the Choctaw and Comanche
18 members of the military of the United States during
19 World War I and World War II—

20 (A) are evidence of the commitment of
21 members of Indian tribes of the United States
22 to the defense of the United States; and

23 (B) add to the proud legacy of service by
24 those members in the military of the United
25 States.

1 **SEC. 3. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.**

2 (a) AUTHORIZATION OF AWARD.—

3 (1) IN GENERAL.—The President may award,
4 on behalf of Congress, to each of the Choctaw and
5 Comanche code talkers listed in paragraph (2) (or to
6 a surviving family member of each of those Choctaw
7 and Comanche code talkers), a gold medal of appro-
8 priate design to honor, and express recognition by
9 the United States of, the Choctaw and Comanche
10 code talkers who distinguished themselves in per-
11 forming a unique, highly successful communications
12 operation that assisted in saving countless lives dur-
13 ing World War I and World War II.

14 (2) CODE TALKERS.—The code talkers referred
15 to in paragraph (1) are—

16 (A) of the Choctaw Nation—

- 17 (i) Albert Billy;
18 (ii) Victor Brown;
19 (iii) Mitchell Bobb;
20 (iv) Ben Carterby;
21 (v) George Davenport;
22 (vi) Joe Davenport;
23 (vii) James Edwards;
24 (viii) Tobias Frazier;
25 (ix) Ben Hampton;
26 (x) Noel Johnson;

- 1 (xi) Otis Leader;
- 2 (xii) Soloman Louis;
- 3 (xiii) Pete Maytubby;
- 4 (xiv) Jeff Nelson;
- 5 (xv) Joseph Oklahombi;
- 6 (xvi) Robert Taylor;
- 7 (xvii) Walter Veach and
- 8 (xviii) Calvin Wilson; and
- 9 (B) of the Comanche tribe—
- 10 (i) Charles Chibitty;
- 11 (ii) Haddon Codynah;
- 12 (iii) Robert Holder;
- 13 (iv) Forrest Kassanavoid;
- 14 (v) Wellington Mihecoby;
- 15 (vi) Albert Nahquaddy, Jr.;
- 16 (vii) Clifford Ototivo;
- 17 (viii) Simmons Parker;
- 18 (ix) Melvin Permansu;
- 19 (x) Elgin Red Elk;
- 20 (xi) Roderick Red Elk;
- 21 (xii) Larry Saupitty;
- 22 (xiii) Morris Tabbyetchy; and
- 23 (xiv) Willis Yackeshi.
- 24 (b) DESIGN AND STRIKING.—

1 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of the Treas-
2 ury (referred to in this Act as the “Secretary”) shall
3 strike a gold medal to be awarded under subsection
4 (a) having such suitable emblems, devices, and in-
5 scriptions as may be determined by the Secretary.

6 (2) DUPLICATE MEDALS.—The Secretary may
7 strike and sell duplicates in bronze of the medal
8 struck under paragraph (1)—

9 (A) in accordance with such regulations as
10 the Secretary may prescribe; and

11 (B) at a price sufficient to cover the costs
12 of duplicating the medal (including the costs of
13 labor, materials, dies, use of machinery, and
14 overhead expenses, and the actual cost of the
15 medals).

16 **SEC. 4. STATUS AS NATIONAL MEDALS.**

17 A medal struck in accordance with this Act shall be
18 considered to be a national medal for purposes of chapter
19 51, of title 31, United States Code.

20 **SEC. 5. FUNDING.**

21 (a) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is
22 authorized to be appropriated from the United States
23 Mint Public Enterprise Fund such sums as are necessary
24 to pay the costs of striking and awarding medals in ac-
25 cordance with section 3.

1 (b) PROCEEDS OF SALE.—Amounts received from the
2 sale of duplicate bronze medals under this section 3(b)(2)
3 shall be deposited in the United States Mint Public Enter-
4 prise Fund.

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